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ENGLISH PROFICIENCY OF MALES AND FEMALES--IS THERE A DIFFERENCE.

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THE MISSOURI COLLEGE ENGLISH TEST WAS ADMINISTERED TO 1,341 COLLEGE FRESHMEN TO COMPARE THE PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH OF MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS. SIGNIFICANTLY MORE BOYS THAN GIRLS SCORED BELOW THE 50TH PERCENTILE. THE INVESTIGATORS SUGGEST THAT MORE RESEARCH IS NEEDED TO DETERMINE WHY GIRLS ARE MORE PROFICIENT IN ENGLISH AFTER 12 YEARS OF SCHOOL AND WHETHER ENGLISH SHOULD BE TAUGHT DIFFERENTLY TO BOYS. (BN)

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English Proficiency of Males and Females - Is There a Difference?

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Educators often hear students complaining about English. Studies by Chase,[1-2] and Curry[3] have shown that English is an unpopular subject especially with boys. But is there a difference between boys and girls in the area of English proficiency after twelve years of public school? To answer this question a study was designed to compare the proficiency in English of male and female college freshmen.

The study was conducted at a large university located in Northeastern United States. Students were given the Missouri College English Test in a freshman foundation course. Seven-hundred and eight college girls and six-hundred and thirty-three college boys participated in the study. A table of percentile ranks in the test manual was used to convert the raw scores of the male and female participants to percentiles. A comparison was made by quartiles (Table 1). The formula[4] $P_1 - P_2 = \sqrt{PQ\left(\frac{1}{N_1} + \frac{1}{N_2}\right)}$ was used to find the standard error of the difference between uncorrelated percentages.

Findings

More of the males ranked below the 25th percentile than females: the difference was significant at the .01 level. More males ranked from the 25th through the 49th percentile than did females: this difference was significant beyond the .05 level. There were significantly more females than males who scored from the 50th to the 99th percentile. The difference was significant beyond the .01 level.

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Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to compare the proficiency in English of male and female college freshmen. To accomplish this a standardized English test was administered to 1341 college freshmen. The findings indicated that girls were signficantly more proficient in English than boys after twelve years of public school. On the standardized English test administered in the study, significantly more boys than girls scored below the 50th percentile and signficantly more girls than boys scored above the 50th percentile.

Traditionally English has been taught in the same manner to girls and boys. Is it time to consider the possibility of teaching English differently to boys. Are girls more proficient in English because of their social roles in our culture? The investigators think these are areas which deserve considerable thought by educators interested in English. Additional research in these two areas appears to be needed.

Table 1

Male and Female Percentile Scores on a Standardised English Test by Number and Per Cent

Percentile Scores	Males *N = 633		Females N = 708	
	No.	%	No.	%
75–99	51	8.1	174	24.6
50–74	114	18.0	215	30.3
25–49	188	29.7	172	24.3
0–24	280	44.2	147	20.8

*N = total number

References

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